

# Assessment of Intercity Bus Services in Nebraska

**UNO Center for Public Affairs Research  
On behalf of  
Nebraska Department of Transportation**

**August 2020**

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# Assessment of Intercity Bus Services in Nebraska

Prepared By:



On behalf of

**NEBRASKA**

Good Life. Great Journey.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

**Melanie Kiper**

Community Service Specialist

University of Nebraska at Omaha Center for Public Affairs Research

**Kari Ruse**

Transit Manager

Nebraska Department of Transportation

**Bill Bivin**

Statewide Mobility Manager

University of Nebraska at Omaha Center for Public Affairs Research

**B.J. Fletcher**

Graduate Student

University of Nebraska at Omaha School of Public Administration

**Tara Grell**

Graphic Designer

University of Nebraska at Omaha Center for Public Affairs Research

**Matt Harrington**

Communications Specialist

University of Nebraska at Omaha Center for Public Affairs Research

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# Introduction

The Nebraska Department of Transportation is the direct recipient of funds through FTA's Formula Grants for Rural Areas Program, codified at 49 U.S.C. 5311 (Section 5311). The 5311 program provides funding to support the provision of public transportation in rural areas of the state. NDOT is required to spend 15% of its annual Section 5311 apportionment "to carry out a program to develop and support intercity bus transportation."

## Intercity Bus Service Defined

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) defines intercity bus service as *"regularly scheduled bus service for the general public that operates with limited stops over fixed routes connecting two or more urban areas not in close proximity, that has the capacity for transporting baggage carried by passengers and that makes meaningful connections with scheduled intercity bus service to more distant points, if such service is available."*

Intercity feeder service is defined as *"coordination of rural connections between small transit operations and intercity bus carriers."* A feeder service may connect to intercity bus, rail, or air service and may be provided as demand-response mode rather than fixed route.

## NDOT's Intercity Bus Services Consultation Process

To ensure intercity bus service in the state is adequate to meet the needs, NDOT is required to periodically conduct an intercity bus consultation. NDOT has partnered with the Advance team at the University of Nebraska to conduct an assessment of statewide services. The objectives of this assessment include the following.

1. Identify existing intercity bus services
2. Interview intercity bus service providers
3. Conduct public information open houses
4. Gather public input to identify gaps in services
5. Summarize the information gathered
6. Develop an action plan to address intercity bus needs
7. Share the study findings with the transportation community and general public



## Subsidized Intercity Bus Services Providers

Currently, NDOT subsidizes the following intercity bus providers through the Section 5311 program.

- Burlington Trailways
- Jefferson Lines
- Panhandle Trails
- Community Action Partnership of Mid-Nebraska
- Black Hills State Lines

These providers submit applications to NDOT for a two-year grant cycle. Monthly invoices are submitted to NDOT to request reimbursement of up to 50% of their operating assistance deficits using funds from the Section 5311 program. Eligible applicants also receive state funds to match the federal funds up to 50%.

## Current Intercity Bus Services Available in Nebraska

There are seven intercity bus services providers currently operating in Nebraska.

In addition to the scheduled stops listed for each provider, several of the providers also offer demand response along the same route. However, since these stops are not covered under the FTA definition of intercity bus services, information for these stops are not included in the data or calculations provided in this report.

**Burlington Trailways** has one route with eight stops in Nebraska: Omaha, Lincoln, Aurora, Grand Island, Lexington, Kearney, North Platte, and Ogallala.

- The route runs daily, both east and west.
- The route continues west into Colorado; and east into Iowa.

**Jefferson Lines** has one route with one stop in Nebraska: Omaha.

- The route runs daily, both north and south.
- The route continues north into Iowa; and south into Missouri.





**Megabus** has one route with two stops in Nebraska: Omaha and Lincoln.

- The route runs daily, both east and west.
- Lincoln is the terminus of the westbound route. The eastbound route continues into Iowa.

**Express Arrow** has two routes in Nebraska. Route 1 has four stops: Omaha, Fremont, Columbus, and Norfolk. Route 2 has seven stops: Omaha, Lincoln, Grand Island, Kearney, Lexington, North Platte, and Ogallala.

- Both routes run daily, both east and west.
- Route 1 is a closed loop route. Route 2 continues west into Colorado.

**Panhandle Trails** has three main routes in Nebraska. Route 100 has multiple stops in three cities: Alliance, Scottsbluff, and Gering. Route 201/202/203 has multiple stops in 10 cities: Alliance, Chadron, Crawford, Hemingford, Scottsbluff, Gering, Bridgeport, Sidney, and Ogallala. The Pine Ridge Route has two stops in Nebraska: Alliance and Scottsbluff/Gering.

- Route 100 runs multiple, same day roundtrip trips on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays with multiple stops in each of the three cities.
- Route 201 runs a single, same day roundtrip route on Tuesdays and Thursdays.
- Route 202 runs a single, same-day roundtrip on Tuesdays and Thursdays.
- Route 203 runs a single, same-day roundtrip on Tuesdays and Thursdays.
- The Pine Ridge Route runs a single, same-day roundtrip on the first and third Wednesdays of the month, originating in Nebraska and continuing into South Dakota.

**Navigator Airport Express** has five stops in Nebraska: Kearney, Grand Island, York, Lincoln, and Omaha.

- The route runs a single roundtrip daily except Sundays.

**Community Action Partnership of Mid-Nebraska (RYDE Transit)** has one route with six stops in Nebraska: Lexington, Cozad, Gothenberg, Brady, Maxwell, and North Platte.

- This service is demand response intercity feeder services, runs curb to curb, pickup and delivery stops are offered in selected cities at locations determined when the passenger makes a reservation.
- The roundtrip route runs on the second and fourth Thursdays of the month.



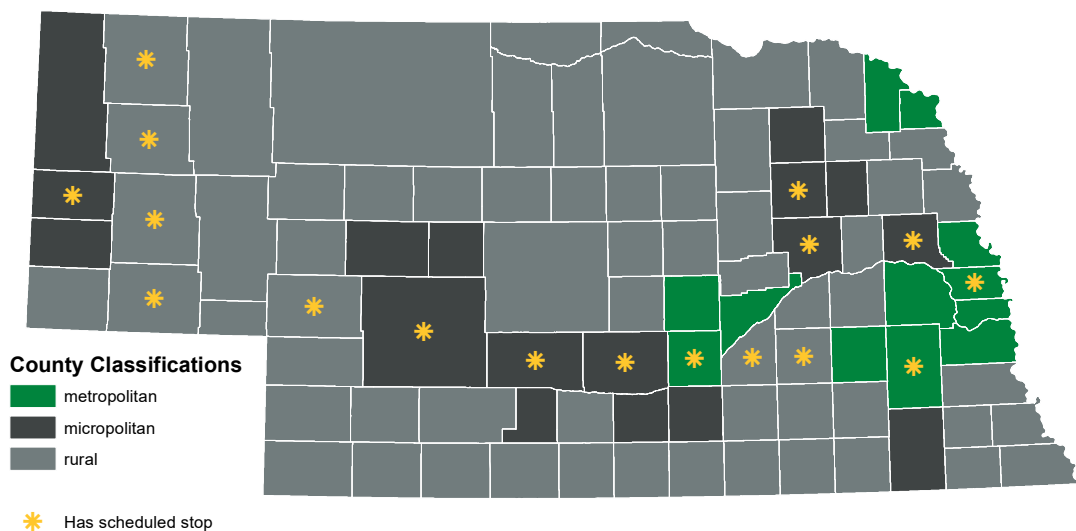
*Intercity bus services routes, Nebraska: 2020*



Source: Nebraska Public Transit website. <https://nebraskatransit.com/index.php/find-transportation/>

## Figure 2

Counties with scheduled intercity bus services stops and county classifications,  
Nebraska: 2020



Source: U.S. Office of Management and Budget. OMB Bulletin No. 20-01. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Bulletin-20-01.pdf>



## Coverage and Areas Lacking Coverage

The six fixed route intercity bus services providers have scheduled stops in 20 different municipalities in 17 counties in Nebraska. These counties account for 65.2% of the population of Nebraska.

There are multiple stops in only three of the 12 metropolitan counties; and in five of the 17 micropolitan counties. The remaining stops are in nine of the 64 rural counties.

The single metropolitan city (Omaha) and single primary city (Lincoln) have multiple stops. There are stops in 14 of the 30 first class cities; stops in three of the 117 second class cities; and stops in only one of the 381 villages in Nebraska.

In Nebraska, metropolitan cities have a population of 300,000 or more; primary cities between 100,000 and 300,000; first class cities between 5,000 and 100,000; second class cities between 800 and 5,000; and village between 100 and 800. Second class cities can opt to revert to village status.

We can identify the areas lacking coverage by looking at the other side of the numbers presented above.

About 35% of Nebraska's population — living in 76 of Nebraska's counties — do not have an intercity bus stop in their county.

Over one-half of Nebraska's first class cities do not have an intercity bus stop.

Almost none of the 498 second class cities and villages have an intercity bus stop in their municipality (99.2%).

## Connectivity

As previously defined, intercity bus service is that it should make meaningful connections with scheduled intercity bus service to more distant points. Connecting to other modes of public transportation, such as local bus services, passenger trains, and airlines, is also important.

An analysis of the specific locations of stops among the intercity bus services providers and other public transportation providers shows that many provide interconnectivity through intersecting routes with common stop locations, stops at airports, or stops at the intercity bus terminal in Omaha.

- Arrow Express and Burlington Trailways have daily routes that stop at the same locations in six cities: Grand Island, Lexington, Lincoln, North Platte, Ogallala, and Kearney.
- Panhandle Trails routes 201, 202, and 203 intersect and offer transfers at stops in four cities: Hemingford, Scottsbluff, Gering, and Bridgeport.



- Five of the providers operate routes in Nebraska that are just one portion of a larger route that continues into and beyond bordering states in all directions: Colorado (west), Iowa (east), South Dakota (north), and Missouri (south).
- Three providers have stops at the interline bus terminal in Omaha where passengers can access other public transportation services including Omaha Metro Bus.
- One provider operates demand response intercity feeder service connecting Kearney and Lexington.

## Other Intercity Transportation Systems

Other intercity transportation options include being transported by relatives, friends, or neighbors; private for profit transportation services such as taxis and shuttles; rideshare services such as Uber or Lyft; Amtrak; and airline services.

### Amtrak

Amtrak operates one long-distance route through Nebraska, the California Zephyr, which runs one train in each direction daily. Amtrak has stations in Omaha, Lincoln, Hastings, Holdrege, and McCook. Table I lists the stops and shows the number of passengers at each stop for FY 2014 through FY 2018.

**Table I**

*Amtrak passengers by station, Nebraska: FY2014-FY2018*

Station	FY2014	FY2015	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018
Omaha	23,585	26,585	29,477	29,599	27,524
Lincoln	12,873	15,384	14,726	15,964	15,196
Hastings	5,601	5,433	5,104	5,214	5,304
Holdrege	2,247	2,345	2,237	2,002	2,225
McCook	3,414	3,342	3,049	2,914	3,278

Source: Amtrak State Fact Sheets. <https://www.amtrak.com/state-fact-sheets>

While none of the providers have a stop at an Amtrak station five of the providers have stops in Lincoln and/or Omaha where Amtrak stations are located. These cities are large enough to provide multiple taxi or rideshare options to transport passengers from the intercity bus stop location to the Amtrak station. None of the providers have stops in the other three cities where Amtrak stations are located.



## Airline Service

Nebraska has nine airports with scheduled airline service, six of which are in nonmetropolitan areas of the state. Table 2 lists the airports and the passenger enplanements for 2014 through 2018. Around 90% of all enplanements in Nebraska each year are at the airport in Omaha.

**Table 2**

*Passenger enplanements at airports with scheduled service, Nebraska: 2014-2018*

<b>Airport</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>
<b>Omaha</b>	2,020,354	2,046,179	2,127,387	2,243,658	2,454,878
<b>Lincoln</b>	142,205	160,525	162,876	154,465	150,214
<b>Grand Island</b>	61,400	64,602	68,879	66,842	63,298
<b>Scottsbluff</b>	5,594	5,144	4,262	3,709	14,295
<b>Kearney</b>	8,384	4,543	4,180	4,607	4,568
<b>North Platte</b>	5,016	4,628	4,075	3,911	13,798
<b>McCook</b>	401	333	1,619	2,710	2,356
<b>Chadron</b>	777	1,715	4,474	5,532	5,218
<b>Alliance</b>	472	1,474	2,139	2,460	2,921

Source: Federal Aviation Administration, Passenger Boarding (Enplanment) and All-Cargo Data for U.S. Airports, 2014-2018. [https://www.faa.gov/airports/planning\\_capacity/passenger\\_allcargo\\_stats/passenger/](https://www.faa.gov/airports/planning_capacity/passenger_allcargo_stats/passenger/)

Nebraska intercity bus services providers have scheduled stops at four airports in Nebraska: Omaha Eppley Airfield; Lincoln Airport; Western Nebraska Regional Airport (Scottsbluff); and Chadron Municipal Airport. In addition, there are stops in four of the additional five cities where airports are located in Nebraska (Grand Island, Kearney, North Platte, and Alliance). Only McCook is not located on any of the intercity bus services routes.



## Interviews with Intercity Bus Services Provider

The UNO Center for Public Affairs Research, working in conjunction with NDOT, developed a questionnaire to collect information from intercity bus services providers (see Appendix A). The questionnaire was used as a guide to conduct consistent interviews. A list of seven intercity bus services providers to interview was provided by NDOT.

An initial phone call was made to each provider to request an interview with a representative familiar with the operation of services within Nebraska. Follow-up emails were sent to providers who did not respond to voicemails. Three of the providers did not respond to any telephone or email requests for interviews: Megabus, Denver Coach, and Navigator Express. It was subsequently learned that Denver Coach has changed its business model and is no longer an intercity bus services provider.

Representatives from the other four providers agreed to an interview: Burlington Trailways, Jefferson Lines, Express Arrow, and Panhandle Trails. The questionnaire was provided to each provider before the interview to help them prepare. Interviews were conducted between March 18 and April 2, 2020. It is important to note that contact was made during the beginning stages of the COVID-19 pandemic which took a huge toll on the travel industry.

Each interview began with a screening question. Providers were read an operational definition of intercity bus services and asked if their agency meets this definition. If they agreed, the interview proceeded. If not, the interview was terminated. All four providers met the definition and interviews were completed.

### Primary Purpose for Travel

The first set of questions identified why passengers use intercity bus services. Providers were asked how frequently passengers utilize their services by trip purpose. The top five reasons for using intercity bus services are visiting friends or family; school related; going to the airport; medical appointments or treatments; and work related. Table 3 presents the distribution of responses to this question.



### Table 3

*How often do your passengers have the following reasons for using intercity bus services? (n=4)*

Reason for using intercity bus services	Commonly	Sometimes	Never
Medical appointments or treatments	1	3	0
Going to the airport	1	3	0
Work related	2	2	0
School related	3	1	0
Shopping	1	1	2
Visiting friends or family	4	0	0
Sightseeing/tourism	1	1	2

Ridership ranged between 8,064 and 120 passengers for two of the providers. The other two providers did not have ridership data available.

### Serving Limited English Proficiency Persons and Special Needs

Each provider offers booking services either by phone and/or on their website.

All four providers indicated their website is the best location to find a complete schedule — including routes, locations, and times — of the services provided. A review of the four websites found that none had a clear option to translate the website into another language or include accessibility or 508-compliant features to assist with navigation of the website or booking.

The next set of questions sought to understand the scope of services for non-English speakers. Providers were asked how often they receive requests for service from individuals who are non-English speakers. Three of the providers indicated they sometimes do and one provider indicated they rarely do. Providers most often receive requests from Spanish speakers. One provider also receives requests from Chinese speakers.

Each provider has a different procedure for responding to requests from non-English speaking customers. The procedures are described below.

1. Retains two employees on staff that are bilingual and able to assist Spanish speaking customers.
2. Recommends that someone bilingual call the provider on behalf of the non-English speaking customer.
3. Uses Google Translate.
4. Pays for an interpreter service and every driver is given instructions on how to use it.



Providers were asked how often they receive requests from special needs passengers. Two providers indicated they sometimes receive requests, one provider indicated they very frequently receive requests, and one provider indicated they often receive requests. All providers offer wheelchair access and request 24-48-hour advanced notice to be able to provide ADA equipment or have staff on hand to provide assistance during the boarding process.

## Market Potential

Providers were asked a series of questions about market potential and additional services.

Jefferson Lines has conducted a needs-based market study. They have considered adding more frequent services by expanding future routes in the area. NDOT will provide federal funding for a marketing campaign in fiscal year 2021.

Panhandle Trails has conducted a market study through a grant from the Community Transportation Association of America. As a part of this study they considered different needs and markets for the Nebraska Panhandle region. To date they have not considered adding more frequent services and are not currently considering expanding or creating additional routes. The lack of additional vehicles and limited labor pool are the primary reasons from not implementing new services.

Burlington Trailways has not conducted a study of market potential. They would consider adding more frequent services if customer counts were constantly high. There are no current plans to expand or create additional routes due to a lack of demand for additional services, limited connectivity to the National Carrier Network, and a driver shortage.

Express Arrow has conducted a study of market potential. At the time of the interview, they were in the process of conducting a study of the current services and other services that could be added such as shipping and freight services. They have considered adding more frequent services based on the need for services and departure times. They identified the potential for creating additional routes by establishing partnerships with other local transit providers to connect with local cities, in particular, in the Ogallala and Grand Island areas. They were in the process of expanding partnerships but these plans are delayed due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

## Intermodal Services

In addition to market potential, providers were asked a set of questions about intermodal services and facilities.

All four of the providers interviewed indicated their routes connect with other intercity bus services and three of the providers connect to other kinds of services such as airports, train stations, and charters such as Greyhound.





Providers market their services primarily through their website or social media sites. One provider also has brochures and other printed materials available. One provider makes information available through online transportation provider companies.

All of the providers commented on the need for intermodal passenger facilities that would allow for connections between local public transportation and intercity bus services.

## Gaps in Services

A series of questions were asked to help identify possible gaps in services. Each provider identified possible gaps in the market or groups who need more services.

### Jefferson Lines

- The Hispanic population as a group is currently underserved.
- There is a need for more services to social service agencies, colleges, and universities.
- Bus facilities need improvement.
- The greatest unmet public transportation need in rural Nebraska is the opportunity for passengers to find transportation to Iowa to get access to additional bus services.
- There is a need to provide public transportation at night and on the weekends.
- Local communities could benefit from further discussion relating to intercity bus services in Nebraska.

### Panhandle Trails

- Veterans and college students are two groups currently underserved.
- There is a demand for intercity bus services to destinations not currently served: the Nebraska Highway 20 corridor; routes between Chadron to Valentine; and routes among Scottsbluff, Alliance and Rapid City, South Dakota.
- Additional services could be extended to social service agencies, colleges, and universities.
- Areas of needed improvement include number of vehicles, accessible facilities, facilities with indoor bays, and increased access to technology.
- They are not aware of any existing intercity or public transportation services in Nebraska that are vulnerable to termination.
- Areas that could benefit from further discussion of intercity bus services in Nebraska include Kimball, Cheyenne, Garden, Scotts Bluff, Dawes, and Grant counties.



## **Burlington Trailways**

- Individuals who need help getting to their stops, either because of limited mobility or limited access due to geographic location (e.g., passenger in small cities which limited connections) are currently underserved.
- They do not see a demand for intercity bus services that are not being served. Funding from FTA's 5311 program helps provide services to customers.
- Bus facilities in bigger cities need improvement. Omaha should be an intermodal city.
- There needs to be designated spots to provide services to customers.
- They are not aware of any existing intercity or public transportation services in Nebraska currently vulnerable to termination.
- No entities were identified who could benefit from further discussion of intercity bus services in Nebraska.

## **Express Arrow**

- Ogallala and the Panhandle area are markets currently underserved.
- The greatest unmet need is connecting customers to larger cities (e.g., those trying to travel to Chicago and Denver).
- Small rural providers in some areas of Nebraska are currently vulnerable to termination.
- No entities were identified who could benefit from further discussion of intercity bus services in Nebraska.

## **Additional areas of Discussion**

All providers noted that wages and other compensation for all employees of intercity bus service providers is an important topic that needs to be addressed. Funding is important to help cover expenses, especially with the current COVID-19 outbreak. It is hard to keep running services without funding. Another important consideration is possible integration with Interline bus ticketing services to help reach customers.



# Public Input About Intercity Bus Services

As part of the Nebraska Mobility Management program, NDOT and a consultant team have conducted two feasibility studies to expand intercity bus services in Nebraska. One study explored the feasibility of increased intercity bus service between Lincoln and Omaha. The other study focused on connecting Grand Island, Kearney, and Hastings with new intercity service. Nebraska.

## Lincoln-Omaha Intercity Bus Feasibility Study

The study provides detailed information regarding existing travel patterns, examines peer communities, identifies costs, and recommends preferred routes. The study determined the investment needed to launch similar service including operating costs, capital needs and long-term sustainability. The project study area for this feasibility study included the metropolitan areas of Lincoln and Omaha and the surrounding communities of Waverly, Greenwood, Ashland, and Gretna.

The study provides detailed information regarding existing travel patterns, examined peer communities, identified costs, and recommended preferred routes. The public involvement activities conducted during the study engaged key stakeholders within each community along the corridor. Three rounds of public open house meetings, community and employment surveys, and key stakeholder meetings provided valuable input. It is estimated over 500 participants were contacted for each round of engagement. Over 85% of community survey responses indicated intercity bus service would be valuable for their community.

A route plan was developed, including a funding/implementation plan. The plan has not yet been tested. Details of the route, and more information about the study, can be seen in the final report of the feasibility study available at [nebraskatransit.com](http://nebraskatransit.com). A final operational plan will be completed in a subsequent study phase, which may result in changes before the service is open to the public.

## Grand Island/Kearney/Hastings Intercity Bus Study

This project produced a feasibility study for intercity bus service in the tri-city area of Grand Island, Hastings, and Kearney. During the study phase, NDOT and the consultant team engaged in extensive public involvement throughout the tri-city area. Stakeholders and the public provided valuable input to determine service frequency and identify potential stops along suggested routes. The project study area included the tri-city area and the major corridors travelling between the communities, including Interstate 80, U.S. highways 281, 20, and 6, and State Highway 44.



The team compiled demographic data and information on existing transportation services; additional transportation services; previous intercity bus studies; peer services; and regional transportation needs and demand. The goal of the tri-city service is to partner with existing rural public transportation services to enhance the existing intercity bus network.

The team sought input from a wide variety of stakeholders and interested parties. Activities included an online community survey, an online employer survey, an online route alternatives survey, and three rounds of community engagement. The first round identified community needs, the second round refined the service details, and the final round presented information on the route alternatives, cost, and service frequency. The preferred alternative includes four flexible, fixed routes connecting the three regional centers – Grand Island, Hastings, and Kearney. All routes serve areas of employment density and major educational facilities, but also provide connections to the national network of intercity bus services, local public transit hubs, the Amtrak station, and regional airports. Together these routes provide a connected regional transit network that can be used for a variety of trip purposes. Details of the proposed service, and more information about the study, can be seen in the final report of the feasibility study available at [nebraskatransit.com](http://nebraskatransit.com).

The report includes a funding plan and implementation plan. These set the stage for the next phases of the project to secure funding and begin the process of coordination with local partners for funding, finalizing the routes, build bus stop infrastructure, and launch the service.

## Public Comment Period

To gather additional comments and input from the public regarding unmet needs in intercity bus services, an online questionnaire was developed (see Appendix B). Notices of a public comment period, in English and Spanish, were posted the week of May 10, 2020, in seven local newspapers in western Nebraska: McCook Daily Gazette, North Platte Telegraph, Star-Herald (Scottsbluff), Chadron Record, Sidney Sun Telegraph, Alliance Times-Herald, and Ainsworth Star-Journal (see Appendix C). The comment period ran until May 20, 2020.

There were only two valid responses to the questionnaire. One was aware of intercity bus services in their area and had used it in the last 5 years for a trip of 25 miles or more to access medical services; the other was unsure and had not used it in the last 5 year. Reasons offered to use an intercity bus service were convenient time and location; low fares; and having multiple-day service offered. Suggestions for intercity bus routes offered were Lincoln to Kansas City; Panhandle to Rapid City, South Dakota; Panhandle to the Colorado Front Range; and Panhandle to Cheyenne, Wyoming.



## Vehicle Access

Based on an analysis of the 2014-2018 American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample:

- 3.4% of Nebraska's 1.8 million population do not have access to a vehicle. This represents 62,974 persons.
- 5.3% of all households do not have access to a vehicle. This represents 40,324 households.

Not having access to a vehicle varies considerably by the age of the household residents. Figure 3 shows the percentages of people living in households with no vehicle available by five-year age group.

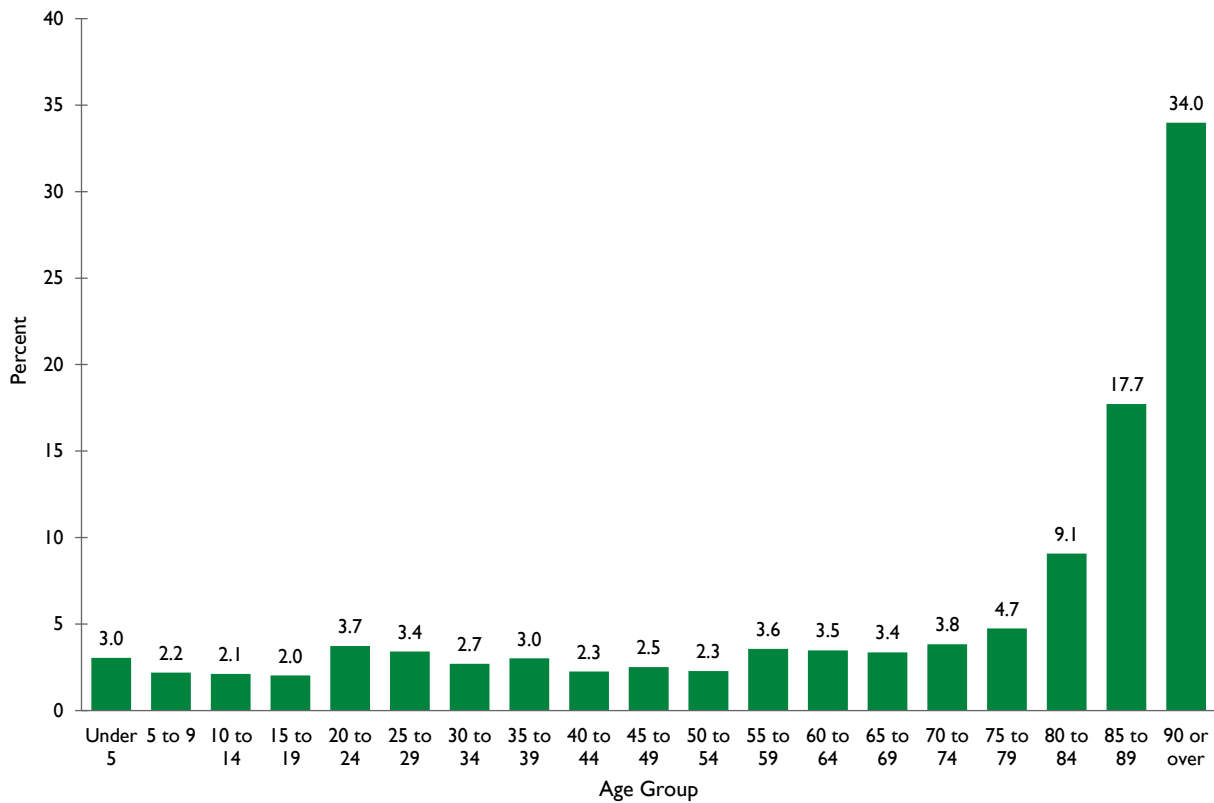
- Between 2.0% and 3.8% of persons in age groups under age 75 do not have access to a vehicle.
- 4.7% of persons ages 75 to 79 do not have access to a vehicle.
- 9.1% of persons age 80 or older do not have access to a vehicle.
  - The percentage for those in their late 80s is double that of those in their early 80s (17.7% versus 9.1%).
- 34.0% of persons age 90 or older — nearly double that of those in their late 80s — does not have access to a vehicle.

Figures 4 and 5 map the percentages of households with no vehicle available by county for all households and for households with a householder age 65 or older, respectively. Table 4 lists this same data. Note that this survey-based data from the U.S. Census Bureau is more accurate for areas with more population, meaning that data for Nebraska's least populated counties should be used with caution.



### Figure 3

*Persons living in households with no vehicle available by age groups, Nebraska: 2014-2018*

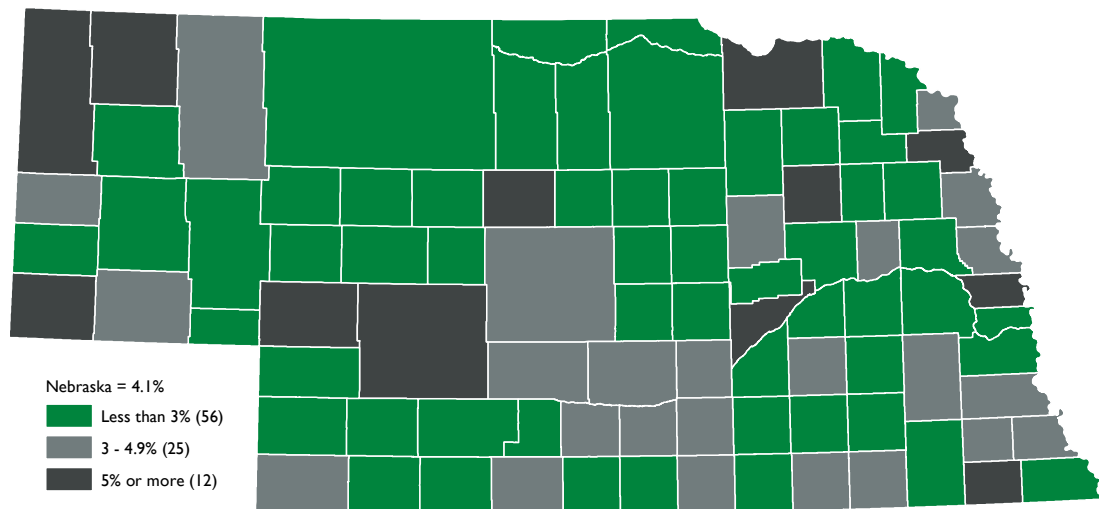


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year Estimates Public Use Microdata, 2014-2018.



## Figure 4

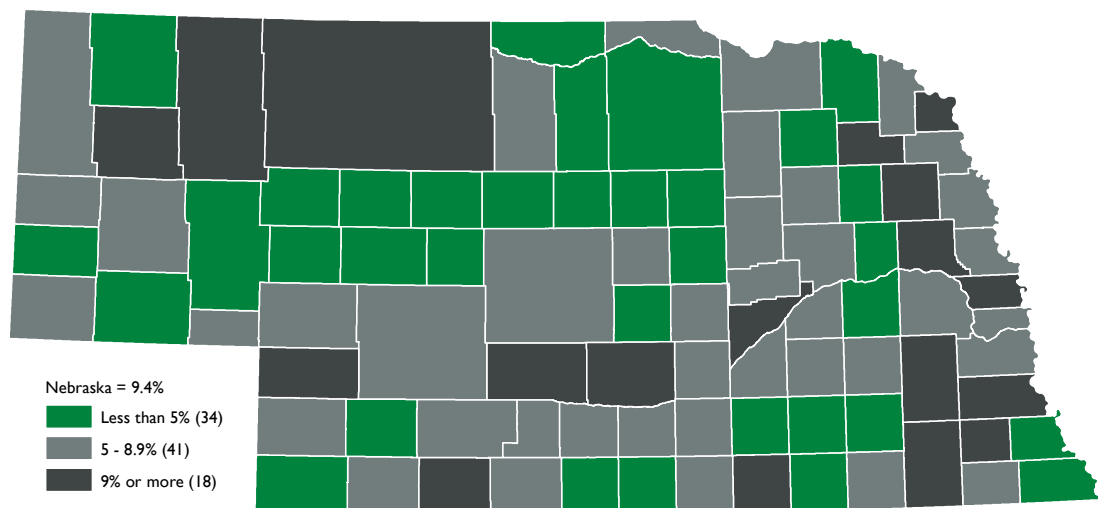
*Percent of households with householder under age 65 years with no vehicle available for Nebraska counties: 2014-2018*



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, 2014-2018.

## Figure 5

*Percent of households with householder age 65 years or older with no vehicle available for Nebraska counties: 2014-2018*



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, 2014-2018.



**Table 4***Households with no vehicle available, Nebraska counties: 2014-2018*

	Households headed by someone under age 65			Households headed by someone age 65+			All households		
County	Households with no vehicle available	Total households	% with no vehicle available	Households with no vehicle available	Total households	% with no vehicle available	Households with no vehicle available	Total households	% with no vehicle available
Nebraska	23,290	571,871	4.1	17,175	182,192	9.4	40,465	754,063	5.4
Adams	425	9,198	4.6	280	3,512	8.0	705	12,710	5.5
Antelope	50	1,748	2.9	54	927	5.8	104	2,675	3.9
Arthur	0	111	0.0	0	82	0.0	0	193	0.0
Banner	6	204	2.9	1	75	1.3	7	279	2.5
Blaine	10	138	7.2	0	80	0.0	10	218	4.6
Boone	50	1,538	3.3	41	742	5.5	91	2,280	4.0
Box Butte	103	3,499	2.9	169	1,302	13.0	272	4,801	5.7
Boyd	11	538	2.0	27	365	7.4	38	903	4.2
Brown	23	901	2.6	32	533	6.0	55	1,434	3.8
Buffalo	460	14,905	3.1	438	4,260	10.3	898	19,165	4.7
Burt	68	1,904	3.6	68	1,015	6.7	136	2,919	4.7
Butler	46	2,345	2.0	40	1,032	3.9	86	3,377	2.5
Cass	162	7,373	2.2	173	2,632	6.6	335	10,005	3.3
Cedar	46	2,327	2.0	54	1,129	4.8	100	3,456	2.9
Chase	11	1,165	0.9	48	549	8.7	59	1,714	3.4
Cherry	32	1,715	1.9	99	851	11.6	131	2,566	5.1
Cheyenne	140	3,222	4.3	40	1,212	3.3	180	4,434	4.1
Clay	19	1,815	1.0	30	759	4.0	49	2,574	1.9
Colfax	130	2,814	4.6	38	904	4.2	168	3,718	4.5
Cuming	59	2,531	2.3	140	1,221	11.5	199	3,752	5.3
Custer	109	3,313	3.3	126	1,533	8.2	235	4,846	4.8
Dakota	179	5,752	3.1	236	1,704	13.8	415	7,456	5.6
Dawes	172	2,641	6.5	23	982	2.3	195	3,623	5.4
Dawson	279	6,705	4.2	263	2,292	11.5	542	8,997	6.0
Deuel	6	534	1.1	25	290	8.6	31	824	3.8
Dixon	33	1,589	2.1	45	722	6.2	78	2,311	3.4
Dodge	307	10,979	2.8	436	4,310	10.1	743	15,289	4.9
Douglas	9,695	171,941	5.6	5,742	43,846	13.1	15,437	215,787	7.2
Dundy	24	597	4.0	6	268	2.2	30	865	3.5
Fillmore	41	1,695	2.4	19	815	2.3	60	2,510	2.4
Franklin	7	878	0.8	17	476	3.6	24	1,354	1.8
Frontier	15	683	2.2	27	433	6.2	42	1,116	3.8
Furnas	50	1,379	3.6	58	763	7.6	108	2,142	5.0





	Households headed by someone under age 65			Households headed by someone age 65+			All households		
County	Households with no vehicle available	Total households	% with no vehicle available	Households with no vehicle available	Total households	% with no vehicle available	Households with no vehicle available	Total households	% with no vehicle available
Gage	126	6,372	2.0	288	2,788	10.3	414	9,160	4.5
Garden	10	558	1.8	13	313	4.2	23	871	2.6
Garfield	11	531	2.1	5	355	1.4	16	886	1.8
Gosper	4	589	0.7	26	288	9.0	30	877	3.4
Grant	3	190	1.6	2	103	1.9	5	293	1.7
Greeley	7	619	1.1	16	415	3.9	23	1,034	2.2
Hall	641	17,507	3.7	485	5,363	9.0	1,126	22,870	4.9
Hamilton	36	2,692	1.3	51	1,007	5.1	87	3,699	2.4
Harlan	13	966	1.3	15	555	2.7	28	1,521	1.8
Hayes	4	296	1.4	3	117	2.6	7	413	1.7
Hitchcock	15	764	2.0	24	445	5.4	39	1,209	3.2
Holt	73	3,100	2.4	52	1,335	3.9	125	4,435	2.8
Hooker	1	193	0.5	0	126	0.0	1	319	0.3
Howard	22	1,783	1.2	61	901	6.8	83	2,684	3.1
Jefferson	93	2,198	4.2	56	1,085	5.2	149	3,283	4.5
Johnson	60	1,230	4.9	70	590	11.9	130	1,820	7.1
Kearney	62	1,893	3.3	74	789	9.4	136	2,682	5.1
Keith	148	2,454	6.0	83	1,390	6.0	231	3,844	6.0
Keya Paha	0	211	0.0	2	115	1.7	2	326	0.6
Kimball	73	993	7.4	31	578	5.4	104	1,571	6.6
Knox	140	2,428	5.8	72	1,246	5.8	212	3,674	5.8
Lancaster	4,307	96,269	4.5	2,726	26,377	10.3	7,033	122,646	5.7
Lincoln	684	10,854	6.3	347	4,131	8.4	1,031	14,985	6.9
Logan	0	232	0.0	0	109	0.0	0	341	0.0
Loup	0	177	0.0	2	102	2.0	2	279	0.7
McPherson	0	124	0.0	2	79	2.5	2	203	1.0
Madison	569	11,073	5.1	297	3,181	9.3	866	14,254	6.1
Merrick	124	2,380	5.2	97	944	10.3	221	3,324	6.6
Morrill	36	1,349	2.7	32	633	5.1	68	1,982	3.4
Nance	22	1,098	2.0	27	448	6.0	49	1,546	3.2
Nemaha	72	2,017	3.6	31	860	3.6	103	2,877	3.6
Nuckolls	35	1,171	3.0	80	743	10.8	115	1,914	6.0
Otoe	163	4,495	3.6	228	1,957	11.7	391	6,452	6.1
Pawnee	75	733	10.2	47	486	9.7	122	1,219	10.0
Perkins	2	828	0.2	46	397	11.6	48	1,225	3.9
Phelps	112	2,812	4.0	84	1,115	7.5	196	3,927	5.0
Pierce	48	2,215	2.2	35	811	4.3	83	3,026	2.7



	Households headed by someone under age 65			Households headed by someone age 65+			All households		
County	Households with no vehicle available	Total households	% with no vehicle available	Households with no vehicle available	Total households	% with no vehicle available	Households with no vehicle available	Total households	% with no vehicle available
Platte	277	9,436	2.9	281	3,564	7.9	558	13,000	4.3
Polk	37	1,395	2.7	57	657	8.7	94	2,052	4.6
Red Willow	78	3,116	2.5	175	1,343	13.0	253	4,459	5.7
Richardson	57	2,492	2.3	59	1,280	4.6	116	3,772	3.1
Rock	4	415	1.0	4	211	1.9	8	626	1.3
Saline	47	3,803	1.2	33	1,270	2.6	80	5,073	1.6
Sarpy	916	52,881	1.7	934	12,164	7.7	1,850	65,045	2.8
Saunders	67	5,885	1.1	150	2,441	6.1	217	8,326	2.6
Scotts Bluff	420	10,492	4.0	330	4,121	8.0	750	14,613	5.1
Seward	52	4,839	1.1	158	1,757	9.0	210	6,596	3.2
Sheridan	61	1,392	4.4	106	859	12.3	167	2,251	7.4
Sherman	11	879	1.3	19	479	4.0	30	1,358	2.2
Sioux	23	388	5.9	11	191	5.8	34	579	5.9
Stanton	33	1,829	1.8	19	581	3.3	52	2,410	2.2
Thayer	73	1,491	4.9	28	792	3.5	101	2,283	4.4
Thomas	0	200	0.0	1	92	1.1	1	292	0.3
Thurston	121	1,634	7.4	46	541	8.5	167	2,175	7.7
Valley	31	1,175	2.6	53	665	8.0	84	1,840	4.6
Washington	203	5,939	3.4	165	2,186	7.5	368	8,125	4.5
Wayne	14	2,785	0.5	91	872	10.4	105	3,657	2.9
Webster	32	1,035	3.1	45	484	9.3	77	1,519	5.1
Wheeler	0	230	0.0	5	127	3.9	5	357	1.4
York	174	4,069	4.3	100	1,622	6.2	274	5,691	4.8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey 5-year Estimates Public Use Microdata, 2014-2018.



## Summary and Conclusions

Intercity bus service in Nebraska is limited by a low population density, lack of providers, and few opportunities to make a meaningful connection with the national intercity bus network. NDOT is committed to providing continued support and improving accessible, cost effective public transportation across the state. This system must include a robust intercity bus network to connect the rural population with services and intermodal transportation in urbanized areas.

Since the last intercity bus assessment in 2017, NDOT has supported and facilitated the following activities.

1. A study was conducted to determine the feasibility of intercity bus service to connect Grand Island, Hastings, and Kearney. The final report was released in June 2020 and included community profiles, public engagement activities, needs assessment, development of routes, and cost estimates to provide the service.
2. A study was conducted to determine the need and feasibility of providing increased intercity bus service between Lincoln and Omaha. The final report was released in June 2020 and included a review of existing services, ridership estimates, alternative routes, and an implementation plan.
3. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, NDOT partnered with existing intercity bus providers to use funding from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) to support service in Nebraska. Over \$2 million was set aside to reimburse the operating deficit with 100% federal funds through June 30, 2021.

Listed below are plans for future activities.

1. Identify local match funding sources for intercity services to connect Grand Island, Kearney, and Hastings and increase intercity service between Lincoln and Omaha.
2. Write and release a request for proposals for bus operators to provide the service as described above.
3. Continue to promote intercity bus service through a statewide transit marketing campaign.



# Appendices

## Appendix A

### Intercity Bus Provider Interview Questions

#### Current Intercity Bus Services

*The first series of questions are about the current intercity bus services your company provide in Nebraska.*

*Intercity bus service is defined as: Regularly scheduled bus service for the general public which operates with limited stops over fixed routes connecting two or more urban areas not in close proximity, which has the capacity for transporting baggage carried by passengers, and which makes meaningful connections with scheduled intercity bus service to more distant points, if such service is available.*

Based on the definition of intercity bus service I just read, do you operate any scheduled intercity bus services in Nebraska? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If no, Why do you think your company does not meet the definition of intercity bus service?

How can I get an updated and/or complete schedule, including routes, locations, and times, of your intercity bus services?

People use intercity bus services for a variety of reasons. How often do your passengers have the following reasons? The options are commonly, sometimes, or never.

	Often	Sometimes	Never
Medical appointments or treatments			
Going to the airport			
Work related			
School related			
Shopping			
Visiting friends or family			
Sightseeing/tourism			

Of these, which is the most common reason passengers use your intercity bus service? \_\_\_\_\_

How far in advance should a rider make a reservation to use your intercity bus service?

How often do you receive a request from non-English speakers? The choices are Very frequently, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, or Never.

☐ Very frequently ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never



(If anything except never) In which of the following languages have you received a request?

Spanish	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Vietnamese	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Arabic	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Farsi	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

If yes, what other languages \_\_\_\_\_

Describe how your company handles requests from callers that are non-English speakers?

How often do you receive a request from a person with special needs? The choices are Very frequently, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, or Never.

☐ Very frequently    ☐ Often    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Rarely    ☐ Never

Describe how your company handles requests from passengers that have special needs?

What is the average monthly ridership on your intercity bus routes in Nebraska?

Have you conducted a study of market potential? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please describe the study.

Have you ever considered adding more frequent service? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please describe what has been considered.

Do you have future plans to expand or create additional routes? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please specify the new routes and the cities they would include.

What, if anything, has prevented you from implementing new services?

### Intermodal Services

*The next series of questions are about how your services connect with other services.*

Do your intercity bus routes connect with other intercity bus services on either or both sides of the route? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please describe how they connect.

Do you operate any other kinds of services in Nebraska, such as connections to airports or train stations, charter or tour services? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please describe the connections.

How and where do you make information of these services available to the public? (E.g., Websites, brochures, posted scheduled, etc.)



Do you presently have a need in your area for intermodal passenger facilities that could allow connections between local public transportation and intercity bus services? ☐ Yes ☐ No

### Needs

*This series of questions is about gaps in services.*

Are there particular markets or groups that you see needing more service? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please identify the markets or groups.

Is there a demand for intercity bus services to destinations that you do not currently serve?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please identify route(s) by origin/destination pairs that could benefit most from the provision or improvement of service.

If yes, how did you become aware of this demand? (Check all that apply.)

☐ Customers ☐ Social service agencies ☐ Colleges/Universities  
☐ Military installations ☐ Other

Please offer any comments regarding other aspects of intercity bus services that you see as needing improvement, such as vehicles, condition of bus facilities, schedule information, wheelchair accessibility, marketing, etc.

Including the need for intercity bus service (as defined above), what are the greatest unmet public transportation needs in your rural or regional area of Nebraska, beginning with the need with the highest priority?

Are there existing intercity and public transportation services that are vulnerable to termination in your area of Nebraska? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please explain.

What other county or regional entities could benefit from being included in the discussion of intercity bus services in the area of Nebraska you serve?

Please describe any intercity bus needs that you have not addressed in an earlier question.

### Current Intercity Bus Service Feasibility Projects

*This series of questions is about your participation in current projects.*

Are you aware that the Nebraska Department of Transportation is conducting a Lincoln-Omaha Intercity Bus Feasibility Study? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes,...

Were you invited to participate in the study? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Did you participate in any of the stakeholder meetings for the study? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Have you received adequate updates and information about the study? ☐ Yes ☐ No



Are you aware that the Nebraska Department of Transportation is conducting a Grand Island-Kearney-Hastings Intercity Bus Feasibility Study? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes,...

Were you invited to participate in the study? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Did you participate in any of the stakeholder meetings for the study? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Have you received adequate updates and information about the study? ☐ Yes ☐ No

## Appendix B

### Questionnaire Soliciting Public Input About Intercity Bus Services in Nebraska

Thank you for your interest in providing information and comments to help us assess needs in intercity bus services in Nebraska.

Intercity Bus Service is defined as: *Regularly scheduled bus service for the general public which operates with limited stops over fixed routes connecting two or more communities not in close proximity. These buses have the capacity for transporting bags carried by passengers and make meaningful connections with scheduled intercity bus service to more distant points, if such service is available.*

Using the definition above, are you aware of any Intercity Bus Services in your area? Yes | No | Unsure

Do you know how to purchase a seat on the bus? Yes | No | Unsure, but I know how to find out.

Do you know where the bus stops in your community? Yes | No | Unsure, but I know how to find out.

Do you know when the bus stops in your community? Yes | No | Unsure, but I know how to find out.

In a year, how often do you take trips of more than 50 miles? Select one. Never | 1-2 times | 3-6 times | More than 6 times

What methods of transportation do you use for trips of more than 50 miles? Select all that apply:

Automobile | Train | Airplane | Bus | Other, please specify

Which of the following best describes your reasons for traveling more than 50 miles? Select all that apply.

Commute to/from work | Going to/from a business trip (meeting, convention, training, etc.) |  
Going to/from school/university college | Accessing medical services | Going to/from entertainment (theater, concert, sports, etc.) | Visiting friends or family | Shopping | Personal business | Moving/relocating | Vacation | Other, please specify.

Have you used an Intercity Bus Service in the last 5 years? Yes | No | Unsure

How far did you travel from home to where you got on the Intercity Bus, for your most recent trip? Select one.

Less than 5 miles | 5 to 9 miles | 10 to 24 miles | 25 miles or more

How did you travel to where you got on the Intercity Bus, for your most recent trip? Select one.

Private vehicle | Local bus service | Taxi, ride share, shuttle service | Bicycle or walked |  
Amtrak train | Other, please specify

Why did you use an Intercity Bus Service for your travel over 50 miles?



What would it take for you to use an Intercity Bus Service?

Where would you like an Intercity Bus Service to run in Nebraska? You can list city pairs, specific destinations, specific routes, general regions or any other description of where you would like to see service. You can see the current Intercity Bus routes at [nebraskatransit.com/index.php/find-transportation/](http://nebraskatransit.com/index.php/find-transportation/).

Is there anything else you would like to add regarding Intercity Bus Service in Nebraska?

Thank you for completing our survey. The information gathered here will be summarized in a report on intercity bus usage and available at [nebraskatransit.com](http://nebraskatransit.com) after November 1, 2020.

For more information, or questions, contact: Kari Ruse, Nebraska Department of Transportation, P.O. Box 94759, Lincoln, NE 68509-4759; [kari.ruse@nebraska.gov](mailto:kari.ruse@nebraska.gov); voice telephone (402) 479-4694; TDD telephone: (402) 479-3834; Fax (402) 479-3884.

## Appendix C

### Notice of Public Comment Period

The Nebraska Department of Transportation, in collaboration with the University of Nebraska at Omaha, is gathering comments and input from the public to assess needs in intercity bus services. The information received will be compiled and used in an overall study of intercity bus usage and other related products.

The comment period closes May 20, 2020.

Input can be submitted online at [nebraskatransit.com](http://nebraskatransit.com) or mailed to the address below.

For more information contact: Kari Ruse, Nebraska Department of Transportation, P.O. Box 94759, Lincoln, NE, 68509-4759; [kari.ruse@nebraska.gov](mailto:kari.ruse@nebraska.gov); voice telephone: (402) 479-4694; TDD telephone: (402) 479-3834; Fax: (402) 479-3884.

### Aviso de período de comentario público

El Departamento de Transporte de Nebraska, en colaboración con la Universidad de Nebraska en Omaha, está recopilando comentarios y aportes del público para evaluar las necesidades en los servicios de autobuses interurbanos. La información recibida será compilada y utilizada en un estudio general del uso de autobuses interurbanos y otros productos relacionados.

El período de comentarios se cierra el 20 de mayo de 2020.

La entrada puede enviarse en línea en [nebraskatransit.com](http://nebraskatransit.com) o enviado por correo a la dirección a continuación.

Para más información contacte a: Kari Ruse, Departamento de Transporte de Nebraska, P.O. Box 94759, Lincoln, NE, 68509-4759; [kari.ruse@nebraska.gov](mailto:kari.ruse@nebraska.gov); teléfono de voz: (402) 479-4694; Teléfono TDD: (402) 479-3834; Fax: (402) 479-3884.

